Enhancement in freedom fighters' pension

†2350. SHRI DATTAMEGHE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that freedom fighters in the country are facing economic crises with present pension, as prices are rising continuously;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering to raise their pension;

(c) if so, whether Government would also consider to offer them any special package; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT): (a) to (d) The amount of pension was initially Rs. 200/- per month. After periodic enhancement, the amount was fixed at Rs. 1500/- per month with effect from 2nd October 1994. In August 1997, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of our Independence, the amount of pension was doubled. Besides, pension was also linked with the consumer price index. In February 2005, basic pension of unmarried & unemployed dependent daughters of deceased freedom fighters was enhanced from Rs. 600/- per month for the eldest and Rs. 350/- per month each for the other two to Rs. 1500/-per month each for all three. In August 2005, the basic pension of freedom fighters and spouses of deceased freedom fighters was enhanced by Rs. 1000/- per month with effect from 15th August 2005.

Recently, the basic pension of freedom fighters and spouses of deceased freedom fighters was again enhanced by Rs. 2330/- per month, so that the total pension, inclusive of dearness relief, becomes Rs. 10,001/-per month. The date of giving effect to this enhancement is 2nd October 2006 (which is the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the founder of *Satyagaraha* movement and the Father of the Nation).

Apart from pension, freedom fighters are also provided the following facilities by the Government of India:—

(i) Free railway pass (1st Class/AC Sleeper) for freedom fighter and widow, along with a companion, for life;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(ii) Free medical facilities in all Central Government hospitals and in hospitals run by PSUs under the control of the Bureau of Public Enterprises, C.G.H.S. facilities have also been extended to freedom fighters and their dependents;

(iii) Telephone connection, subject to feasibility, without installation charges, and on payment of only half and rental;

(iv) General Pool residential accommodation (within the overall 5% discretionary quota) to freedom fighters in Delhi;

(v) Widow/widower of the freedom fighter is also permitted to retain the accommodation for a period of six months after the death of the freedom fighter; and

(vi) Accommodation in the Freedom Fighters' Home set up at New Delhi for freedom fighters who have no one to look after them.

In addition to the above facilities, ex-Andaman freedom fighters are also entitled to the following facilities:

Free voyage facility for freedom fighter and widow, to visit Andaman & Nicobar Islands, once a year, along with a companion; and

(a) Free air travel facility for freedom fighter, to visit Andaman & Nicobar Islands, once a year, along with a companion.

All major facilities provided to freedom fighters are also extended to their widows/widowers.

Unemployed tribal graduates registered in Employment Exchanges

2351. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the actual number of unemployed tribal graduates in the country registered with Employment Exchanges and steps taken to absorb them in various jobs;

(b) the steps taken by Government for skill and capacity building of those unemployed tribal graduates to enable them to carry out various self employment schemes; and